



JAMES D. HUNTER, D. D.



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# JOHN MARK;

OR,

THE MAKING OF A SAINT.

BY

REV. JAMES D. HUNTER, D.D.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

REV. FLOYD W. TOMKINS, D.D.



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TO MY  
WIFE AND DAUGHTER.





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## PREFACE

THE reader is forewarned not to expect in these pages an ordinary biography of John Mark, nor a formal treatise on the making of a saint. The author has attempted to blend the biographical and the didactical. The aim has been to make John Mark live before us and instruct by his example at every turn.

The basis of these chapters was an address delivered by the author to young people and others. In its present form, the address has been recast and expanded.

The career of John Mark naturally falls into five distinct periods. These are severally marked by the five divisions of the book.

The author trusts that the reader may have, at least, a tithe of the pleasure and profit, in perusing these pages, that he had in following the career of John Mark in their preparation.

THE AUTHOR.



## INTRODUCTION

IN these days when the Bible is brought to the dissecting table, and rude hands are treating it as a common rather than as an inspired book, it is well to bring to young Christians the result of a reverent study to prove how much truth is contained even in a few selected passages and isolated texts.

It is well, also, to lead young Bible students to "search the Scriptures" in such a way as to bring the threads of truth together and weave them into a pattern of beauty and guidance. God's Word has been given for study, not merely for mechanical reading, and he who reverently handles its pages is bound to find riches of truth undreamed of by the ordinary Christian.

But above all, it is most wise in these modern days to bring the Bible characters into such light as shall show them to have been men of like experiences and characteristics with our-

selves. They are examples for us, and they need to be translated, as it were, into our modern method of thinking and being in order that we may see how human they were and how possible it is for us to learn from them and imitate them. If the great apostle could say that the experiences of the children of Israel were recorded for our admonition, how much more would he teach that the followers of Christ were not men far separated from us to-day, but brothers of like passions, and struggles, and needs, and failures, and successes. What Farrar has done for us all in his "Life of Christ" we need to have done for us in connection with every character mentioned in the Bible. Dr. Stalker has helped much by so narrating the lives of some of the Old Testament heroes, but it has not been attempted to any extent with the noble body of men and women who are grouped about the dear Christ in the New Testament. We sincerely wish that what Dr. Hunter has done with John Mark could be done with many of the apostles and disciples and faithful women whom the casual reader knows only by name. We believe that it is a happy

beginning of much healthy literature which shall prove the best kind of Bible commentary for our young church people.

It may be objected that there is a kind of irreverence in thus bringing those whom tradition and custom have united in naming "saints" down to the common life of our crude twentieth-century standards—that even the language of such histories as this volume should be a little more polished and reserved. But in answer, it must be remembered that we can only really grasp human nature when it stands side by side with us and speaks the every-day speech and evidences the every-day emotions. Too much of our religious study misses its mark because expressed in the stilted language of the finished rhetorician or in the technical speech of the exact theologian. There are thousands of Christians to-day who will welcome and read and profit by such a story as this of John Mark, but who could not be reached by a technical history or a highly polished and unidiomatic narrative. The author, we take it, has not written for Bible scholars or theologians, but for the body of brave, true-hearted, believing

Christian folk who are readily inspired by what they can understand.

As long as life lasts there will be present with us an intense longing to be brought near to the Christ of history and near to his companions. Any attempt to satisfy honestly this longing is an attempt to enlarge the scope of personal struggle and to open the mind to a higher ideal. The bridging of the nineteen long centuries since Jesus walked in Palestine is to be accomplished, not by linguistic dissection of Gospel or Epistle, nor by textual criticism which has neither basis from which to start nor end to which it tends, but by a simple, natural reproduction of the men of long ago, so that they will walk with us on our streets and speak to us in our daily aspirations. Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day and forever; and Christianity and Christian experience, and Christian battle, are the same, because centered in him, the ever unchangeable One. It is good to know how St. Mark the Evangelist lived and fought and fell and conquered. We learn from him the fact of God's everlasting love and everlasting help.

FLOYD W. TOMKINS.

HOLY TRINITY RECTORY,  
Philadelphia, June, 1903.



## FIRST PERIOD

Character Receiving Its Bent—Heredity  
and Environment—Modern Evangelism



# JOHN MARK

## I.

CHARACTER RECEIVING ITS BENT—HEREDITY  
AND ENVIRONMENT—MODERN EVANGELISM.

No one would dispute Pope's familiar line

"The proper study of mankind is man."

And it is indisputable that character-study is the most practical and popular of the studies of the human subject. The most useful character-study is a study of the life of a saint. It is more profitable to study the making of a saint than it is to study the making of an artist, a poet, a scholar, a soldier, or a statesman. The making of a saint is a grander achievement than the making of a state, a navy, a university, a poem, or a painting.

Saints are not made in a day, but in a lifetime. They are not made simply by the special means of grace, but also by the ordinary ex-

periences of life. "All things work together for good" in the making of a saint. Whatsoever ye do, if done for the glory of God, "reflects as in a mirror the glory of Christ," and "ye are changed into the same image." And this is the making of a saint, the gradual changing of the Old Man into the New Man.

The author has selected John, whose surname was Mark, to illustrate the making of a saint. The reference, of course, is to the author of the second Gospel, the Gospel according to St. Mark.

It is surprising how little the average reader of the Bible knows about this saint. Beyond the fact that Mark wrote one of the four Gospels, few, comparatively, know anything about him. And yet the sacred narrative throws much light upon the character and career of John Mark. The allusions to him in the Acts and the Epistles, though few, are luminous. They imply much more than is expressed. They occur at turning points in his career and serve as outlines to his life, so that it needs only a disciplined imagination to fill up the gaps and produce an almost complete picture of the man.

## Character Receiving Its Bent 5

The popular impression would seem to be that Mark was a commonplace disciple, in whose life there were no striking incidents, and in whose character there was nothing to excite special admiration. On the contrary, when all the facts in Mark's life scattered throughout the New Testament and the inferences to be drawn from them legitimately are brought together, we are introduced to a most interesting character from a Christian standpoint, and have presented for our contemplation a career abounding in instruction for the aspirant after sainthood.

In studying for inspiration any character that has attained unto eminence, we are most helped not by simply contemplating the finished product, but also by acquainting ourselves with the raw material, so to speak, and tracing the various stages of development, with its attendant vicissitudes.

The writer does not know how others may have felt about the characters of the Bible, but he used to think that these old saints, particularly the apostles and evangelists of the New Testament, were—well, not exactly superhuman,

and yet scarcely human! It was a long time before he came to realize that they were men of "like passions with us." He counted it a distinct gain when he made that discovery, not that he likes to think worse of any man than he really is, but that he does like to think of every man just as he is.

We are losers rather than gainers by the tendency to idealize our heroes. The whole point of James' argument for prayer, in citing the case of Elijah, whose prayer shut up the heaven from giving rain for the space of three years, and then again opened it so that the heaven gave rain, rests on the fact that the prophet was a man of "like passions with us." It is for the encouragement of all men to hope and strive for the best that the Bible preserves on its records the vices of its heroes, and not merely their virtues. If great and good men, after all, are only human, they show the inherent greatness of our common humanity. And, indeed, genius, whether spiritual or intellectual, is neither miracle nor monstrosity. It is man at his best. Every individual genius proves the genius of humanity.

## Character Receiving Its Bent 7

Now, John Mark was verily human. It is not meant that he ever sank to the lowest depths of human degradation. Far from it. He was no prodigal son. It is said, "to err is human." But we do not have to break every one of the ten commandments to prove that we are human. John Mark's faults were respectable, if faults are ever respectable. That is, Mark never lost standing in respectable society by any of his shortcomings. And for all that he is the better example of the making of a saint. His weaknesses represent the common weaknesses of humanity. He is a sample of the average raw material out of which God makes saints.

Ordinarily certain favoring conditions must exist in order to start a soul on the career of a saint. These conditions would seem to have been amply supplied in the case of John Mark. He was the son of his mother. Most good and great men are. The mother of John Mark was one of the famous group of Marys. His father, most likely a believer also, appears to have died not long after the crucifixion. The original home of the family would seem to have been on the island of Cyprus, where, pos-

sibly, Mark first saw the light of day. But our earliest acquaintance with John Mark finds the family residing in Jerusalem. Here within the walls of this sacred city the most impressive years of Mark's life were spent. Daily the temple of Solomon would rise before his eyes and the Psalms of David resound in his ears. Here, too, Mark was permitted to see the uprising of another Temple that should endure forever and to hear the first reverberations of the new song of Moses and the Lamb. John Mark was reared at the parting of the ways.

Mary seems to have been left with a competency upon the death of her husband, and to have enjoyed the great boon of possessing a home of her own, where she could shelter her little flock with a sense of security and independence. While wealth and a luxurious home may not be the most favorable condition in which to cultivate a saintly character, yet a home from which want and the rent-collector are banished certainly offers the most favorable chances for the rearing of saints. To be sure, something more than a legal title is necessary to constitute a home. But the measure



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of thrift indicated by the ownership of one's home, and the feelings engendered and fostered by such a happy lot, are prime conditions to the surest rearing and maintaining of noble characters. John Mark represents the great majority of those who turn out to be true saints—the great middle class of plain, thrifty home-builders. It is true that while the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, the Son of Man had not where to lay his head. But in this Jesus did not pose as our example, as he did not in some other things, in the matter of marriage, for instance.

Some modern advocates of certain revolutionary doctrines think that the best type of manhood cannot be produced until great social changes take place. And Jesus and his gospel are quoted to support the rankest socialistic or communistic theories. But Mary, the mother of John Mark, may be cited as proof of a contrary spirit in the life and teaching of Jesus. No doubt Mary acknowledged her obligations to others, and likely was one of those women "who ministered unto him of their substance." But she does not seem to have been led away by the excitement which arose later among the

disciples at Jerusalem, when "all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." She seemed to think that private ownership of property was consistent with the full discharge of one's duty to his neighbor. We must believe that Mary, by her devotion to Christ and immediate touch with his life and teaching, had imbibed the true spirit of the Gospel. Undoubtedly Jesus was a socialist in a true sense, and, if his example and teachings were faithfully followed, no doubt many changes would be wrought in the constitution of modern society. In a word, the socialism of Jesus may be described as making the individual responsible for society, rather than society responsible for the individual.

That Mary retained possession of her house is evidenced by the fact that it continued for years to be the headquarters of the disciples when in Jerusalem, and as such was always referred to as "the house of Mary." We say continued to be the headquarters, for while Jesus was still living he and his disciples appear to have made "the house of Mary" their

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resting place when, during the hours of the day, they had occasion to be in Jerusalem. At night they would always retire to the country or village of Bethany. There is no record that Jesus, during all his public ministry, ever slept in Jerusalem. It is thought by some that Jesus ate his farewell supper with the disciples at the home of Mary. And some have conjectured that "the man bearing a pitcher of water," whom the two disciples met as they went to make preparation for the last supper, was John Mark. If this conjecture be correct, then this would be the earliest reference to Mark. But this would hardly seem to be a probable conjecture.

The first mention by name of John Mark is found in an account of a meeting in Mary's house, a decade or more after the death of Jesus. It was during a fresh outbreak of persecution, shortly after the death of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. The apostle James having been put to death, Simon Peter was cast into prison to await his turn. But the angel of the Lord, as on a previous occasion, descended to deliver the apostle out of the hands of his persecutors, and in the closing

hours of what was intended to be his last night on earth, led him forth a free man into the streets of Jerusalem. And, as the record runs, "When he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying."

John Mark must have been at that prayer-meeting, as he had been at others before in the same place. He was not at first an active participant in these meetings, but only an interested spectator, such as those whom we now denominate "adherents," "associate members," "occasional visitors," or "a friend" brought in by a member. But he was present, and it was good for him to be at the church in his mother's house, even if only as an "outsider." It could not be otherwise than that the earnest prayers offered, the warm exhortations given, and the good fellowship enjoyed, should make a profound impression upon the heart of the young man. We are not surprised, therefore, to gather that Mark was converted, probably, a few years before the meeting just referred to. While for some time he had not been far from the kingdom of God, at last he comes out

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openly into the kingdom. The honor of winning this promising convert to Christ belongs to Simon Peter. This apostle calls him "my son," in the same manner that Paul calls Timothy "my son." But the conversion of Mark was an instance where "one soweth and another reapeth." Mary and others had been sowing, but Peter entered into their labors and gathered "fruit unto eternal life."

John Mark was the first young man to join the Christian Church, so far as we have any mention of individual cases. He could not have been out of his teens when he took this important step. Of course, we do not think now of that age as being young to connect with the Church. In modern times the majority of members have united with the Church by the time they are as old as was Mark, or very little older.

The fact is, there is no particular age at which one ought to be expected to "get religion" and join the Church. It ought to be taken for granted that every child is a child of the kingdom, and that the souls of all infants have been redeemed by the atonement of Christ. The Church should put her loving arms about

the babe in the cradle and bear it on her bosom through life to the grave. Little children are budding saints, and they should be planted in the House of the Lord to "grow up into him in all things." While the Church confesses her mission to the children, especially in these latter days, yet she makes bungling work with them, and lets them get away from her in large numbers. As a great American preacher has said, "Here are the children among us, and we open our Sunday schools and make it bright for them, and do get very close to them there with the love of God, but all the while we feel that the Church does not more than half know what to do with them; its theories and machineries are made for grown-up people. It wishes the children would hurry and grow up, so that it might know how to talk to them, what to do with and what to make of them." The trouble begins with our wrong conceptions of what religion is, and of the capacity of the child to be religious. Now, religion is life, possessed and directed by God. And to doubt the capacity of a child to be religious is as absurd as to doubt the ability of a child to live at all.

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The vicious theory that one must attain a certain age before he can have any true religious experience will account, in a large measure, for the astonishing number of the unchurched to be found in communities enjoying church privileges from the beginning. If the next generation is to witness a more general attendance upon our church services, this generation must be more faithful in holding on to the young of the present. Think, for a moment, on the condition that exists at the present time in respect to church attendance! It is conservatively estimated that more than one-half of our entire population never crosses the threshold of any church! The greater proportion of these are men. The male members of our churches constitute only one-third of the entire membership. It is estimated that no less than five millions of young men in this country never darken a church door, and that another million and a half attend some church occasionally without identifying themselves with any church. The working-men of our country constitute the largest percentage of the non-attendants. Indeed, there are thousands and thousands of men in the mills and factories of

our industrial centers who are almost as ignorant of the Bible as the unevangelized heathen.

The only hope for these unchurched masses is, somehow, to bring them and the Church into touch, in order to their conversion. John Mark was first brought under the influence of the Church, and then followed logically his conversion. Nothing short of the conversion of souls is worthy of the Church, in seeking to reach men. And men are more readily reached when it is apparent that this is the chief concern and ultimate aim of the Church. Other objects may be allowed as secondary and intermediary to this supreme end. But the Church must be candid with the world and confess that the salvation of souls is its one supreme object. It is to be feared that the Church often needs to keep before it the fact that for this object alone it exists and labors. To make "associate members" of unconverted young people, is well enough as a first step, but it is worse than vain unless it leads to the next step, namely, the full and complete surrender of such members to Christ. The gathering of the children and others into the Sunday-schools is an urgent duty and a blessed privilege, but to stop there



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is to end in failure. "Church sociables" and "entertainments," under proper restrictions, are tolerable only as a means of paving the way that leads to the cross. Unless they are made a means in the conversion of their members, "brigades," "clubs," "societies" within the Church are only bringing the world into the Church. If the "institutional Church," about which we hear so much these days, makes the physical, intellectual, social, the sole or chief object, it will prove a misnomer.

John Mark never could have had any other idea than that the Church yearned only to make him a true child of God. And here is where the Church got such a hold on the young man. That was the secret of the attraction of the Church for him.

Fortunately, perhaps, he did not have to go to church—the church came to him. That was because the first disciples did not have any church buildings. What if the church edifices of a later period are barriers to reaching the masses with the gospel? May it not be possible that the soldiers of Christ, in these latter days, are in danger of sticking too closely to their barracks? How-

ever, the signs of the times seem to indicate that a more aggressive spirit is taking possession of the Church of Christ. "Forward" seems to be the watchword of the hour. The favorite hymn, the battle hymn of the Church, is that beginning with the inspiring words:

"Onward, Christian soldiers,  
Marching as to war,  
With the cross of Jesus  
Going on before."

No doubt the recent uprising of the young people, with their enthusiasm and splendid organizations, has had much to do in arousing the Church to greater activity, especially in the direction of reaching the masses. The Christian Endeavor Society and other Young People's organizations are splendidly equipped for carrying on an aggressive campaign, and no doubt they have "come to the kingdom for such a time as this." Girdling the earth as they do, lining the streets and avenues of our cities, and encamping on the hills and in the valleys of the country, they are in a strategic position to come up "to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." The service of this great army of young recruits will be

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specially helpful in reaching the hosts of young people who are outside the kingdom. The young can influence the young as older people cannot. Rehoboam still forsakes the counsel of the old men, and consults with the young men.

✓ It is sometimes said that the changed conditions of modern life have made it much harder to reach the masses with the Gospel, and that former methods are wholly inadequate. ✓ Young people, especially, are thought to be more difficult to interest in the Church and religious subjects than was formerly the case. Particularly, when the first century is compared with the twentieth century, is the situation thought to be entirely different. And especially when the case of John Mark's conversion is cited, as an illustration of what the Church can do to-day in reaching young men is there a disposition to deny that it is applicable to the situation in our day. ✓ It might be questioned if John Mark before his conversion represents the typical young man of the world to-day. ✓

Mark may appear to have had better antecedents, and to have been more favorably environed, than the average young man of the pres-

ent. It might seem to have been comparatively easy to find the material for a saint in one brought up in such a home as that of Mary, and surrounded with the associations peculiar to that home.

It is generally conceded that not only physically, but also mentally and spiritually, the parent transmits characteristics and tendencies to the child. Paul would seem to recognize this law of heredity when he uses this language in one of his letters to Timothy, "having been reminded of the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice." John Mark no doubt inherited a religious tendency from his Jewish parents, and, possibly, from a long line of pious Israelites. His environment, too, that is, his home training and example, as well as early association with the disciples of the Lord, was a potent factor in giving a religious bent to his character. But we may easily overestimate the advantages of good parentage and a Christian home, or rather, underestimate the force of the counteracting influences of the world. Who has not seen many young persons, brought up in Christian homes, straying off

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into sinful lives? And we may discount too much for the disadvantages of being brought up in homes not professedly Christian. Who has not seen many children of non-professing parents become most exemplary Christians?

As for the influence of the world upon John Mark, it must be allowed that the conditions which surrounded him in Jerusalem at that age of the world were less favorable to his accepting Christianity than is the case to-day with young men. Talk about modern skepticism poisoning the minds of young men in our day! Why, the skepticism concerning the claims of Jesus the Christ, in the first century, was a thousand-fold greater than it is in the twentieth century! "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" was the wail sent up by the Church at the dawn of our era. We stand aghast, as we well may, at the blighting effect upon the men of the present age of rampant commercialism! But in the age of John Mark, too, "the love of money was a root of all evil"; and the early disciples thought no one could be saved because Jesus had observed, "How hardly shall they who trust in riches enter the kingdom of

heaven." We decry the social influences to-day, drawing our young people away from serious subjects, and making our young men believe they cannot succeed in life if they become Christians, exposing them to petty persecutions if they try to live as Jesus would have them live! But let me call the reader's attention to an incident in John Mark's life which may have been overlooked, and in connection with which we have our very first introduction to the evangelist.

It is the night of the betrayal. The soldiers, conducted by the traitorous Judas and followed by a mob, start out in search of the innocent One. They first go to the single house in all that great city that welcomed the despised Nazarene; but not finding there the object of their search, they hasten to the familiar resort of Jesus and his disciples—the garden of Gethsemane. And when they have found Jesus and taken him and the return to the city is begun, the disciples having all fled, we are told: "And a certain young man followed with him, having a linen cloth cast about him, over his naked body; and they lay hold on him; but he left the linen cloth, and fled naked." That young

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man was John Mark! Awakened by the noise of the soldiers as they searched his father's house, and instantly taking in the situation, John Mark, without taking time to dress, hastened to Gethsemane, in hopes, no doubt, of giving timely warning to Jesus. But he found he was too late—his Master was already a prisoner. Still hoping to be of some service to the dear Lord in the hour of his distress, John Mark followed the crowd on the return to the city, until his presence was discovered and he was obliged to flee for his life.

This incident throws much light upon the character of John Mark, but it is cited here to show the persecution to which he was subjected for avowing sympathy with Jesus. What he had to put up with, both before and after the crucifixion, we can well imagine. If the men who laid hold on him the night of the betrayal and arrest of Jesus were "young men," as the Authorized Version has it, we can infer the petty annoyances, social ostracism, and general boycotting to which John Mark was exposed on account of his relations to Christ. No such hardships have to be endured to-day on account of a Christian profes-

sion, outside of heathendom. No doubt a consistent Christian life would still keep one out of certain social circles, would break many a friendship, and might lose one a valuable position. But truer friends, better society, and, likely, a better position, would await any one having to break with sinful relations on account of a Christian life.

Evangelism has no more difficult task before it to-day than it ever has had, and in Christian lands, in this twentieth century, the difficulties are not nearly so great as they were in Palestine in the first century. New conditions do exist and new methods have to be employed to a certain extent; but it has been true from the beginning and will remain true to the end, that the conversion of the world to Christ must be accomplished by going everywhere and preaching the Gospel to every creature, both collectively and individually. We must go everywhere calling men to be saints, and although "many are called and but few are chosen," yet we must not tarry in our divinely appointed mission.

"Go, labor on while it is day:

The world's dark night is hastening on.

Speed, speed thy work, cast sloth away;

It is not thus that souls are won."



## SECOND PERIOD

Taking up Definite Work—Leaving Home  
—Young People and the Church



## II.

### TAKING UP DEFINITE WORK—LEAVING HOME —YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE CHURCH.

JOHN MARK is now a member of the Church. But joining the Church does not make one a saint. One is then only in the way of becoming a saint. We are “new-born babes” when we join the Church, and we join the Church “for the perfecting of the saints—till we all come—unto a perfect man.” Everything depends, of course, upon the use we make of the Church. Man was not made for the Church—the Church was made for man. The Church is a means to an end—a means of grace to help us to become like Christ.

What kind of a member will John Mark make, now that he has joined the Church? There are church-members and church-members. Some, apparently, look upon the Church as a train of Pullman sleeping-cars on which they may take passage, and, leaving word with the porter to awaken them, may snugly tuck

themselves away in their berths until the train finally pulls into the Grand Terminal!

Some young people even seem to have the sleeping-car idea of the Church. "Now, my dear young friend," says the pastor, addressing a recent convert, "since the Lord has mercifully saved your soul and you have been received into his Church, I suppose you are anxious to take up some Christian work to prove your gratitude to your Saviour for all that he has done for you?" "Christian work! What do you mean, pastor?" replies the astonished member. "I thought you said we are not saved by works, but by faith alone. And does not the hymn say,

'O to be nothing, nothing,  
Only to lie at his feet?'"

"Yes, I surely did say that we are not saved by our good works," responds the no less astonished pastor; "and you have quoted the hymn correctly, so far as you went, but it continues,

'A broken and empty vessel,  
For the Master's use made meet.  
Emptied that he might fill me,  
As forth to his service I go.'

## Taking Up Definite Work 29

We are nothing and can bring nothing in our hands, when we come to God for the pardon of our sins. But you have passed that point, and are now supposed to be a pardoned sinner. As such you are now to do works meet for repentance."

"But I cannot do anything, I have no talent," humbly rejoins the new convert. "Besides, there are plenty in the Church to do all there is to be done. I will attend the services on Sunday, if the weather will permit and I have no other engagement."

"Well, my dear young friend," continues the pastor, "it is true no one of us can do anything in his own strength, but we can all say with Paul, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me. And there is plenty for all to do, and more, too. Besides, you cannot afford to let others do all the work of the Church. You must work out your own salvation. It is not enough to attend the services on the Lord's day and the mid-week service, even were you never to miss a single one of them. Worship is most important, but the Lord expects us to go from his worship strengthened for service. We cannot worship

as we should unless we serve. Worship without service is formal and empty. After having served the Lord faithfully, worship is sweet and helpful. And now as you are young, I would suggest that you join the Young People's Society, and put yourself under training for the Master's service."

"Join the Young People's Society! No, never," answers this young convert, with ill-concealed dismay. "Why, pastor, I never could think of praying and speaking in public."

"Well, now, my dear girl," continues the patient pastor, "I don't say that you must necessarily pray and speak in public, not even in the presence of the members of the society. There is something to do for Christ besides praying and speaking in meetings. Although I think you might probably be able to take part in the meetings in the course of time, and I am sure it would do you a lot of good, and others good, too, provided you could do so without bringing on yourself a nervous attack. I understand you have no difficulty in speaking in other meetings, as those of the Literary Club."

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"Oh, I suppose I might be able to do so after a time," says this young woman, having her pride a little touched. "I think I can learn to do what any other girl can, if I want to. But I am not going to be bound by a pledge."

"But you are already bound by a pledge, as a member of the Church," continues the pastor. "And the pledge of the Society does not add to or take from that original covenant." Here the young woman drops her head in silence, and the pastor wisely concludes not to press the subject further at the present time.

But John Mark did not take the sleeping-car view of the Church. He thought of church-members as those who had "awakened out of sleep" and were "the children of the light, and children of the day." He was not so much looking for transportation to the skies as he was for something to do down here on the earth.

We do not know what specific work John Mark engaged in during the first few years of his discipleship. The fact is, it was about all a believer could do in those days in Jerusalem to keep out of prison! We do know, however, that when the first opportunity presented itself,

John Mark did take up a specific line of religious work. ✓

It came about in this way: Barnabas and Saul (afterwards Paul) came down from Antioch, the Syrian capital, to Jerusalem, being sent by the brethren to deliver to the elders of the Church in the latter city a contribution for the relief of the needy brethren in time of a famine. On the occasion of this visit to Jerusalem, Barnabas and Saul met John Mark, they, in all probability, being entertained while in the city at the home of Mary. Barnabas was a relative of the family, some thinking he was a brother of Mary. But the Revised Version makes it plain that Mark was "the cousin of Barnabas." Now, whether the disciples, attracted to Mark, first suggested the idea; or, whether Mark, hearing from the lips of the disciples the wonderful story of the work at Antioch, first made the proposition; it was planned that, when Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch, John Mark should accompany them, to engage in the work there under their direction. Accordingly we read in the Acts, "And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their minis-



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try, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark."

This was a step showing great consecration on the part of Mark to the service of the Master. It involved the leaving of all and following Jesus. The back was turned upon every other occupation and the life was devoted to the service of religion. Such an abandonment of worldly avocations for the vocation of religion becomes the duty of a few in all ages. But every believer must devote a portion of his time, away from the cares of the world, to distinctively Christian labor. What a strengthening it would be to the Church if all her members would systematically give each week a definite number of hours to religious work! But the choice Mark made also involved the abandoning of home and native land. Not every believer is called upon to leave home and to journey afar to help spread the Gospel. Most of us find our field of labor for Christ in our own homes and in our own neighborhoods. No doubt that is the most difficult field to cultivate. "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country." Even Jesus could not do many mighty works in Nazareth, where he

had been brought up. Even his own brothers did not believe in him until towards the last. His own mother, besides his sisters and brothers, hearing of his public works, said he was "beside himself." John Mark seems to have been induced to leave Jerusalem and labor in Antioch by the consideration of an exceptional opportunity. As long as any part of the world remains without a knowledge of the blessed tidings of salvation, it becomes the duty of some to quit their homes and country and go to the ends of the world to proclaim the glad news of salvation. Mark was but following the example of the apostles and other evangelists in departing from Jerusalem and going to the uttermost parts of the world to preach the Gospel.

It must have been after no little struggle that John Mark made up his mind to leave his widowed mother all alone and set out for the distant city of Syria. While Antioch was only three hundred miles from Jerusalem, it must be remembered that in that day this was much farther than the same distance would be in our day, with present modes of travel. Three hundred miles then would be equivalent to almost

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six thousand miles now. A missionary in China to-day is not separated much farther from his friends at home here in America than was John Mark in Syria. And Antioch was not to be the limit of his journeying either, as we shall presently see. A true spirit of consecration is evidenced by the breaking of home ties, as in this instance of John Mark. We have here a beautiful illustration of the sentiment of the hymn by Mary Brown :

“But if by a still small voice he calls  
To paths I do not know,  
I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand in thine,  
I'll go where you want me to go.”

Leaving home for the first time, and going out to battle with the world, is a most interesting period in any young person's life. It is a time of sorrow and anxiety for the parent, and of mingled sadness and joy for the child. But surely no parent had less need of anxiety than had Mary at Mark's going. He could not have been better prepared to meet the world's temptations, or gone forth under more favorable auspices. And then to part with a son or daughter, leaving home upon a mission such as Mark was entering upon, must be one of

those sacrifices a Christian parent makes with pride and pleasure. The prior claim of the Master upon our children is recognized by every Christian parent; and it makes it easy, comparatively, to give up a son or daughter when told "the Lord has need of him." And knowing that it is wrong to love father or mother more than Jesus, a consecrated child will, at the call of God, promptly leave all and follow him.

In turning his face towards Antioch, John Mark followed the direction of the providential movement of his day. He would seem to have discerned the signs of the times. There were clear indications that the kingdom of God was about to break over the narrow boundaries of the past, to be confined no more to Palestine and the Hebrew people, but to expand and become a world power. The Gentiles were to be brought in; and the first decisive events inaugurating this religious revolution were then taking place at Antioch. Henceforth Antioch, and not Jerusalem, was to be the center of religious activity and influence. John Mark was in entire sympathy with the new departure, and cast in his lot with the broad,

catholic party of the Apostolic Church. No doubt these two most progressive of all the disciples, Barnabas and Saul, greatly influenced Mark; but it was natural for an earnest and bright young man, like John Mark, to sympathize with the views of the Gentile party, rather than with the Judaizers.

We look to the young people of our churches to favor every wise forward movement. Elderly people are apt to be over-conservative. A safe combination is always an older head to lead and a younger heart to follow. John Mark could be trusted on venturing into new paths, under the leadership of the more experienced disciples, Barnabas and Saul.

As a further indication that a new order of things was rapidly developing, it occurred, about the time when Mark went to Syria, that "the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch." Heretofore the disciples were regarded as a sect of the Jews. But now their departure from the customs of the Jews and their extension among the Gentiles seemed to demand a distinctive designation. Therefore, the inhabitants of Antioch, perhaps in deri-

sion, called them Christians. Hearing the disciples speak the name of Christ so frequently and profess such love for the Christ, how natural to call them "Christ-ones!" The name seems not to have been unacceptable to the disciples, and in a comparatively brief time to have become current. It is the one universally acknowledged title of believers to-day in all the world. Many other descriptive names have been added, such as Roman Catholic, Protestant, Greek, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Methodist, Baptist, etc. But these names are chiefly indicative of the many unhappy divisions of the Church. Would that the disciples were still called simply Christians! May the day speed on its way when we shall drop these given names and retain only the surname!

But Antioch, as intimated a while ago, was not to be the permanent field of John Mark's labors. He was destined to journey farther. How long he remained in the capital of Syria, we have no means of knowing positively, but it probably did not exceed two years.

As already observed, the Church was undergoing a revolution. It was beginning to slip

away from the Jews and to become pre-eminently a Gentile Church. Antioch, a Gentile city, is supplanting Jerusalem; and now the most important step yet taken in the direction of a change from the policy of the past is about to be taken. This was the remarkable movement having for its object the carrying of the Gospel into the foreign parts of Asia Minor, and, ultimately, the western continent of Europe. In the execution of this purpose John Mark was permitted to bear a part.

It was probably in the year A. D. 48 that Barnabas and Saul set out from Antioch upon the first of the three famous Foreign Missionary Journeys, in the interests of a world-wide Christianity. Their first stop was on the island of Cyprus, and it was while they were at Salamis, one of the capitals of the island, that we learn that John Mark formed one of this, the first Foreign Missionary Band to be sent forth by the Church. We read in the journal of this tour, as entered at Salamis, "And they had also John as their attendant."

It was a great privilege to be permitted to have part in this movement, which, as one has said, "has changed the very history of the

world." It is only given to a generation, now and then, to live at a time big with events calculated to change the current of the world's life. Not every one who does live at such a crisis is wise enough and brave enough to contribute his share towards shaping future destinies. But John Mark was found on the side of the makers of history and the promoters of the world's progress.

Ours is a generation second only to that in which John Mark lived in witnessing changes, both in Church and State, of far-reaching importance.

"We are living, we are dwelling,  
In a grand and awful time—  
In an age on ages telling,  
To be living is sublime."

The great enterprise of the world's evangelization, begun by Barnabas and Saul and Mark, two thousand years ago, was halted before it reached its consummation. The Gospel has never yet been preached in all the world. But the Church in our day has nobly taken up the work where the apostles left it off, and is pushing the kingdom of God throughout the whole of Asia, Africa, and the islands of the



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sea. Christian civilization is becoming aggressive, and is grappling, as never before, with barbarism. Truly, "to be living is sublime," if we are doing our several parts, as best we can, to bring the whole world into the enjoyment of the blessings, temporal and eternal, of the religion of Christ.

In this brief historical record—"And they had also John as their attendant," we have the first intimation of the particular kind of work John Mark performed. It is true the statement is very general. An "attendant" may be only a traveling companion or servant. But John was neither a menial servant nor an ornamental appendage. His position, we may be sure, was one of dignity and usefulness. He accompanied the disciples to assist them in their work as he might be able and as they might direct. Among his other duties, no doubt, would be that of looking after the details of their journeying and sojourning, such as the conveying from place to place of their baggage, the securing of lodgings at the different towns visited, and the arranging for places in which to hold their meetings. Besides these duties of a business manager, Mark may have

at times acted in the capacity of an amanuensis to Paul. But these more humble duties would not occupy all of Mark's time nor satisfy his ambition. He would also publicly read the Scriptures for the disciples, and testify in the hearing of the various assemblies as to what he knew of Jesus the Christ. John Mark, in the discharge of his various duties, was, as we would say to-day, one of the original trustees, deacons, vestrymen, lay readers, local preachers. On account of his traveling about and giving his testimony to Jesus, he would be classed, in his day, as an evangelist. When, however, he is spoken of to-day as an evangelist, it is simply meant that he wrote one of the four Gospels. Traveling evangelists, in the Apostolic Church, would seem to have been only laymen, and never put in charge of a church.

Mark was willing to turn his hand to any work, however humble, in the cause of Christ. He did not hesitate to relieve his superiors of drudgery, or to take orders from them. There was about him no false pride or uppishness. While in no sense a sycophant, Mark esteemed it an honor to serve the great. He was a good

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example of Emerson's advice: "Serve the great. Stick at no humiliation. Grudge no office thou canst render. Be limb to their body, breath to their mouth. Compromise thy egotism."

Before leaving this original band of missionaries, it should be observed that it is composed of representative men. Barnabas represents the experienced in service, Paul the great champion of truth, and John Mark the enthusiasm of youth. Here is a strong combination of forces! Here we have the wise in counsel, the strong in controversy, and the enthusiastic in action!

The Church has never been without wise counselors and mighty controversialists; but she has suffered at times for the want of youthful enthusiasm. Her young people have not always been sufficiently recognized. Only recently has the Church awakened to the fact that she has a mighty force for good in her youth.

Much apprehension seems to exist in certain quarters lest the numbers and activity of the young people in our churches, in these recent days, prove a hindrance rather than a help to

the efficiency of the churches. There is need, of course, that wise guidance be given to these Young People's Organizations. But there is greater occasion for apprehension lest the enthusiasm of our young people in the matters of the Church be not sustained. There will be more need of the spur than of the bit.

Proof of this last statement will be found even in the experience of this original missionary band, as we shall see at our very next glance at young Mark, in the following chapter.

### THIRD PERIOD

Deserting the Post of Duty—Reasons Why  
Young People Fail—The Grace of Perse-  
verance



### III.

#### DESERTING THE POST OF DUTY—REASONS WHY YOUNG PEOPLE FAIL—THE GRACE OF PER- SEVERANCE.

AND where do we next find the hero of our story? When last seen he was at Salamis of Cyprus, in the faithful discharge of his appointed tasks. Since then a few months have rolled around, and the missionary band having finished its work in Cyprus, has sailed to the coasts of Asia Minor. John Mark then next appears upon the scene on this eastern continent, in Perga of Pamphylia. But it is in a very different rôle that he appears from that in which he appeared at Salamis. Then he was standing nobly by his post of duty, now he is shamefully deserting his post of duty. This is the record we find in the journal kept by Luke: "John departed from them and returned to Jerusalem."

Certainly there must have been some good reason for this sudden and disappointing ac-

tion. Why, the vessel bearing this missionary party from Cyprus had just arrived at port in Asia. Surely John Mark must have expected to enter upon the work with the disciples in this new field. Why, then, depart from the disciples and return to Jerusalem on the very threshold of a "great door and effectual" opened unto him? Is he suddenly taken ill? No, that was not the reason why he returned home. Maybe, then, he found a letter awaiting him at Perga from his mother, summoning him home. But neither does that explain his sudden departure. Was he dismissed, then, by the disciples, and sent home? Oh, no, he had no such sufficient reason as that for his abrupt departure! Possibly, then, he has just gone home on a short vacation. But vacations had not yet come into vogue, and, besides, missionaries are expected to serve a longer term before they take a furlough. Well, then, might it not be that there occurred a shortage in the funds of the Missionary Board at Antioch, and, therefore, it became necessary to recall Mark? But it does not appear that there was any salary promised; and, besides, the tentmakers, Paul and Barnabas,



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would not have suffered any need of finances to interfere with the successful prosecution of the work which they had undertaken.

The truth is, John Mark had no justifiable excuse for departing from Saul and Barnabas at Perga of Pamphylia. No doubt he thought he had, just as many young people often think they have some reason which they can conscientiously give to their Lord and Master for failing, at times, to keep their engagements.

Unfortunately, there is much confusion of thought in the minds of many on the subject of conscience. Conscience is a voice within which always bids us do what is right and refrain from doing what is wrong, praising or blaming us, according as we obey or disobey its voice. It does not, however, determine for us what is right and what is wrong. That we have to think out for ourselves, determine from such wisdom as we may possess, in the exercise of our best judgment. Many a one has thought that he was blameless in some mistaken course because he acted conscientiously. But it should be remembered that conscience, in order to be a safe guide, must be enlightened, and that we are accountable for the enlightenment

of our conscience. We are bound not only to let the light of experience and reason give direction to our conscience, but also, and more especially, are we bound to seek the light of God's Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We must be conscientious in preparation as well as in action—in the making up of our minds as to what is right, as well as in the doing of the right when once we have our minds made up.

If John Mark had given a little more conscientious thought to the course he premeditated taking, he probably would not have felt justified in taking it.

That Mark had no sufficient reason for departing from the disciples at Perga would seem to be made plain by the fact that Paul, at least, never excused him. This will appear a little later. And now, since none of the reasons just supposed can have been the real one, and since the real one is not given, we are left to conjecture as to just why John Mark took the course he did at Perga.

The most probable reason, perhaps, for Mark's desertion is the common one—Discouragement. He may have been not a little

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discouraged when he left Cyprus. The work there had been hard and the results would not seem to have been satisfactory. This band of missionaries had spent some months on the island, and what had they to show for all their sacrifice and toil? So far as appears from the records, they had only one convert as a visible result of their labors. Of course, that one was worth a great deal to the cause, being such a one as Sergius Paulus, the Governor of the island. But his soul was worth no more than the soul of the humblest peasant. And a young man like Mark might be supposed to look for numbers. To be sure there had been much good seed sown, which might be expected to spring up in the near future and bring forth a bountiful harvest. But young people are apt to be impatient and to look for immediate results. Now, under these circumstances, it is easy to imagine how John Mark may have become discouraged. And upon reaching Asia and getting a glance at the field, it may well be that Mark concluded the prospects were even worse. He saw that the people of Asia were more degraded than the people of Cyprus. He foresaw fierce opposition to the truth, bit-

ter persecution, and possible death. We can understand, then, how the heart of this young man may have sunk within him, and panic seized him, so that he was driven to desertion.

It cannot be said that the dangers apprehended by Mark were altogether imaginary. There were real hardships and dangers awaiting these soldiers of Christ in this Asiatic campaign. We know something of what Paul and Barnabas had to endure, how they were driven from one province to another, persecuted and stoned, some of their more relentless enemies pursuing them for a hundred miles and more. We remember that it was on this very journey that Paul, in a certain place, was stoned, dragged out of the city, and left for dead.

But what shall we say of a young man who will get discouraged and give up, when older men, and men like Paul, suffering from physical weakness, keep a good heart and face the worst dangers without flinching? Shall we excuse him because he is young and has been delicately brought up? Discouragements as great as those met with by Mark have been faced by men as young as he, and as delicately

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reared, and that in a cause far less noble. Witness the hardships endured by our soldiers, most of them young men, and many of them unused to roughing it, in foreign campaigns. There is no use of mincing matters, or calling things by any other than their true names. John Mark here plays the coward and the traitor.

It is true these seem like harsh names to apply to one who has heretofore shown such consecration and enthusiasm in the Master's cause. But Mark had not previously been fully tested. He had not known himself, nor been revealed to others. No one of us knows himself, or is known, until the supreme test comes. We must come to our "Perga" before it can be known of what stuff, exactly, we are made. There may be in us more of the shirker, the traitor, the coward than we or others ever dreamed of. Says Phillips Brooks, in speaking of the inhabitants of ancient Meroz: "Cowardice we call the most contemptible of vices. It is the one whose imputation we most indignantly resent. To be called a coward would make the blood boil in the veins of any of us. But the vice is wonderfully common. Nay, we often

find ourselves wondering whether it is not universal, whether we are not all cowards somewhere in our nature." Physical cowards we may not be, but moral cowards we may easily be. Are we not often afraid to express our honest convictions? Do we not sometimes shirk the performance of an unpopular duty? Do we not often secretly in our hearts laud and praise bold, brave men, like Paul and Barnabas, while at the same time we leave them to fight alone the great moral battles of life? What better are we than John Mark?

But if we are not exactly cowards, are we not self-indulgent? and do we not often shirk a duty because it involves much sacrifice? John Mark had not yet reached the point where he was willing "to deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Christ." Well, is not that a point still in advance of most of us? It is amazing how little of the spirit of real self-sacrifice there is in the world! Why, the common, ordinary work of the Church suffers more from "ease in Zion" than from any other cause. It is too much of a sacrifice for many to attend church twice on the Sabbath! And as for teach-

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ing a class in the Sabbath-school, why, that is not to be thought of! The people who are "at ease in Zion" are very scrupulous in keeping the Sabbath Day, so far as "in it thou shalt do no work." Negatively they are strict Sabbath observers, but on the positive side of the fourth commandment they are great desecrators of the day. It is time members of our churches ceased bolstering up their selfish indulgence by quoting the fourth commandment.

But if one class less than another may claim immunity from fatiguing exertion on the Sabbath Day or any other day, it is the young and strong. Let others yield to the temptation to discouragement on account of hardships or risks to health and absent themselves from the post of duty, if they will, but let no young man or young woman in the enjoyment of abounding health shirk his or her duty through fear of a little exhausting of physical strength or weariness of brain.

Life is a great training school, and the various duties of life are so many tests. Then let us breathe this prayer:

"Lord, let me make this rule  
To think of life as school,

And try my best  
To stand each test,  
And do my work,  
And nothing shirk."

But it is possible we have not guessed aright in supposing that the reason why John Mark left Paul and Barnabas at Perga of Pamphylia was discouragement. Possibly his sudden departure can be accounted for on the theory of Insubordination.

As we have inferred from the beginning, John Mark was serving his Master under the direction of Paul and Barnabas. As a young man his natural position would be one of subordination to these two disciples. And prior to their reaching Perga, there is no hint that Mark did not recognize his proper place and yield a glad obedience to every wish of his superiors. Then, why should it be thought possible that now he is moved by a spirit of rebellion to desert the disciples? Well, the suggestion comes from the fact that a change in the organization of the missionary company had occurred just a little while before, together with the further consideration that Paul, in a



dispute with Barnabas over the matter of Mark's desertion some time later, seems to show some personal feeling on the subject. The change in the organization of this missionary band, so far as there was any organization about it, consisted in the promotion of Paul to the leadership instead of Barnabas, who had undoubtedly been the leader from the beginning. This change is implied in the changed order of the names of the two disciples from about the time they left Cyprus. At first the order in which their names were mentioned was invariably Barnabas and Saul, whereas later the order was just as invariably Paul and Barnabas. A change in the apostle's name is also to be noted. Previously he was always called Saul, but now he is always called Paul. Some have supposed that the apostle took this name from Sergius Paulus, whose conversion he was mainly instrumental in effecting. At any rate, the apostle gained great prestige from his successful encounter with Elymas, the sorcerer, and the consequent conversion of the Governor of the island. Barnabas would seem to have been greatly impressed with the apostle's ability to refute error

and to convince the unbelieving. Paul himself may have come to have greater confidence in himself. And so it would quietly come about that Barnabas would naturally defer to Paul, and Paul would as naturally assume the leadership.

Well, now, it is quite conceivable that John Mark did not find his position so comfortable under the new arrangement as he had under the old order. The apparent slight to his dear friend and relative, in the changed positions of Paul and Barnabas, may have prejudiced him somewhat against the apostle. Then, aside from any personal relations, Mark may have preferred a man like Barnabas to be at the head, rather than a man like Paul. Barnabas was an amiable man. His nature was generous and kindly. He had great patience and tolerance. Paul would seem to have been a man of nervous temperament. His was a striking, though perhaps not an attractive, personality. He had a consuming zeal for the cause of Christ. He had a high standard for himself and others. He was inclined to be severe in condemning faults, and, no doubt, would often speak sharply.

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Withal, he was a man with a big heart and broad sympathies and as tender as a woman.

It can be seen how Mark might have rebelled against such a zealous and exacting leader as Paul must have been. Likely he had not been used to being held to a very strict account, and may have been petted and spoiled as a child. Anyhow, young people, as a rule, do not take very kindly to criticism. From the parent in the home down through the teacher in the schoolroom, the pastor in the church, the superintendent in the Sunday-school, the president in the society to the chairman of a committee, criticism of conduct or work is resented by the average young person. But how unreasonable is such resentment! For, as the late Mr. Gladstone once said, "Censure and criticism never hurt anybody. If false, they cannot hurt you unless you are wanting in manly character; if true, they show a man his weak points, and forewarn him against failure and trouble." If John Mark had only known it, he was peculiarly fortunate in having as his leader such a master-workman, so competent a critic! What a training school for the Master's service was

that little band of missionaries under the leadership of the great apostle to the Gentiles!

If our young people's organizations in the modern Church accomplish nothing more than the training of their members to "be in subjection to the powers that be," they will have justified their right to exist and rewarded all the effort spent upon them. "Order is heaven's first law." And an apostle has handed down this injunction, "Let all things be done decently and in order." The peace and prosperity of our churches depend primarily upon the willing subjection of their members to properly constituted authorities. There is no such universal need to-day among the churches of Christ as the need of peace.

"Peace in our hearts, our evil thoughts assuaging,  
Peace in thy Church, where brothers are engaging,  
Peace, when the world its busy war is waging,  
Send us, O Saviour."

But perhaps we have not yet diagnosed the case of John Mark correctly. Another hypothesis still is possible. It may be that Mark's desertion is fully explained on the theory of Irresolution. Never very strongly convinced, perhaps, of the duty or possibility of converting

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the heathen, John Mark has concluded now, after some months of experience and observation, either that the heathen are not worth saving or that they cannot be saved; and in an evil moment of wavering faith he suddenly abandons all further attempts on his part. No doubt Mark did have some genuine zeal for the conversion of the heathen enkindled in his heart at the time he started for Antioch, and when he sailed with the disciples for Cyprus and the regions beyond. But this may well have been only a temporary impulse aroused by the glowing accounts of the work in Syria given by Paul and Barnabas, and the novelty and adventurousness of the undertaking. We all know how easy it is to be aroused to enthusiasm in any cause by the enthusiasm of another, and then in a short time relapse into our former indifference.

There is no cause which demands such profound conviction of the desirability and practicability of its successful prosecution as does the cause of the Christianization of the heathen world. Indeed, one must have a conviction of duty here wrought into his soul, not by the ordinary methods of producing convictions, but

by a supernatural power. If the good resolutions of John Mark to help on the conversion of the heathen were the first to fail, they have not been the last. In this cause many have run well for awhile and then fallen down. Hundreds of others can never make up their minds at all that it is their duty even to contribute a mite toward sustaining foreign missions.

Well, if we have discerned the true motive which actuated Mark in his leaving the foreign field, then, while we cannot excuse him, we can be somewhat lenient with him, seeing that it was only the first century of the Christian era. But for any Christian in this twentieth century to be indifferent to or opposed to foreign missions is utterly inexcusable. The attitude of Jesus towards the heathen world has been settled, and the practicability of converting to Christianity the heathen has been demonstrated. The century just closed has seen the triumph of missions to foreign lands. At the opening of the nineteenth century the whole Church was able to put into the entire field only one hundred and seventy missionaries. Now, the Church has eleven thousand missionaries in the field! Then, the whole amount the Church could raise

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annually for missions abroad was only two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, while now the aggregate gifts of Christians to foreign missions in a single year amounts to the magnificent sum of fifteen millions of dollars! A hundred years ago there were only fifty thousand converted heathen in all the world; at the opening of the twentieth century there are no less than fifteen hundred thousand native converts!

But it may be that John Mark's faith in the final success of missions to the heathen did not waver, and that he only changed his mind as to the success of the efforts of Paul and Barnabas. Starting out with great confidence in the efficiency of these disciples and determination to assist them to his utmost, he now hesitates in his support of their efforts and finally turns against them, withdrawing all further aid. We have already noticed the comparative failure, apparently, of the labors of the disciples the first few months. The outlook in Asia would seem more hopeless. It is true that it is hard for us at this day to conceive of any one doubting the fitness of men like Paul and Barnabas for the work of evangelizing heathen nations.

But it would be very different with one contemporaneous with the disciples and ignorant of their God-given powers. Mark would measure the disciples just as we would measure any ordinary man living in our day. Putting ourselves in Mark's place, and remembering how hastily some people, especially some young people, form their judgments of men, we are able to understand how Mark may have felt, as he is here supposed to have felt, about Paul and Barnabas.

Just what was lacking in the disciples Mark may not have been able to state. He would acknowledge that Barnabas was "a good man, full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith," and that Paul was a cultivated scholar and an able controversialist. But they were not orators, he would say, and lacked the power to sway great crowds, as Simon Peter did on the Day of Pentecost. In fact, John Mark was beginning to long for the stalwart fisherman of Galilee. He felt that it would be good to listen to one of his rousing sermons and witness the effect on one of his great congregations.

But John Mark overlooks one important fact in thus questioning the fitness of Paul and Bar-



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nabas for this mission abroad. He seems to forget that it is distinctly said that the Holy Ghost called Barnabas and Saul to this particular work and sent them forth. "The Holy Ghost said," we read, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." "So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost," the record runs, "went down to Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus." Now, either John Mark or the Holy Ghost is mistaken as to the fitness of these two disciples for this foreign mission. The reader can decide which one would likely be the better authority.

It is a delicate thing to criticise God's servants, and to pronounce upon their fitness for the work to which they seem called of God. In doing so, we may be found to be fighting against God. The egregious blunder of Mark in declaring Paul and Barnabas unqualified for a foreign mission is evidenced by subsequent events in their work on this very journey in Asia, and ought to be a warning to all who presume to sit in judgment upon God's servants. Wonderful success, indeed, attended the labors of these brethren during the

three or four years they spent in Asia, just following Mark's desertion. Crowds flocked to their preaching. "Almost the whole city," we read in one instance, "came together to hear the Word of God." Hundreds of converts must have been made; just how many we have no means of knowing. In the journal kept we find entrances made at the different places visited, like these: "Many believed;" "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed;" "a great multitude, both of the Jews and also of the Greeks, believed." Then, besides conversions we are told that churches were organized, and "elders in every church" were ordained. Indeed, the record of this first journey and the two subsequent journeys proclaim the apostle Paul the greatest missionary the Church has ever had, and is ever likely to have.

The first few months out and the experience on the island of Cyprus may have seemed to cast doubt on the fitness of the disciples for the mission upon which they were sent. But such men are not to be judged on so short a trial or in so limited a field. The best of preachers may seem to fail for a time, and many a man who has failed utterly in one field has made a

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great success in another. A particular field may be too narrow for one man, as a given field may be too wide for another. Paul may not have had scope for his abilities in the insular field of Cyprus, and needed the wider field of the continent of Asia to demonstrate his power.

The weak point, then, in the character of John Mark may have been irresoluteness. He may have lacked depth of conviction of duty, loyal allegiance to his friends, unfaltering faith in the providence of God. He did not possess staying qualities. He wanted the grace of perseverance. Having put his hand to the plow, he looked back. This, if true, would be a serious blemish in his character. Nowhere more than in the Church are needed mutual confidence and steadfast loyalty. Leaders especially must have the support of stanch friends. And at no time do we prize such friends and supporters more than when the work seems to lag and natural discouragements are met with. We never can show the depth of our devotion to a cause or to a person more truly than when reverses occur. A very superficial person will seem to be a firm friend and supporter in time of great prosperity, but only the genuine will

remain firm when adversity sets in. If there ever was a time when John Mark should have shown profound faith in the power of the Gospel and real friendship for the disciples, it was when that missionary band stood face to face with the mighty task of bringing the Gospel to the knowledge of the benighted heathen of Asia, discouraged, perhaps, and fully realizing their weakness for such an undertaking and the great dangers ahead. It was then the disciples needed comfort and all the assistance possible. After they had proven their power to succeed, under God, they would not feel so much their need of human assistance. Anybody will have faith in a man who has achieved success, but only a person of rare discernment or deep sympathy will believe in one who has not as yet won success. It is at the beginning of our careers or undertakings, more than later, that we need friends who believe in us and stand ready to aid us.

Be loyal to your Church, to your society, to your Saviour, at all times, but especially "in the day of small things" and the hour of seeming declension:

"True-hearted, whole-hearted, faithful and loyal,  
King of our lives by thy grace we will be."

## FOURTH PERIOD

Reformation of Character — Disappointed  
Hopes—Church Dissensions—The Merit  
System



## IV.

### REFORMATION OF CHARACTER—DISAPPOINTED HOPES—CHURCH DISSENSIONS—THE MERIT SYSTEM.

WHATEVER may have been the reason for John Mark's desertion, the irrevocable act is done. John Mark has left Paul and Barnabas and returned home. The stigma of a deserter is upon him. The record hitherto so fair has received a blot. The name which was the synonym of honor has been disgraced. The confidence of the good and great has been forfeited.

But what cannot be recalled can be repented of; what cannot be undone can be forgiven. No blot can so stain our fair record that it cannot be washed out. The confidence of no honorable man can be so forfeited that it may never be regained. And it is to the everlasting credit of John Mark that he was not too proud to acknowledge his grievous mistake.

That John Mark did make this acknowledg-

ment, and did sincerely repent of the false step he took, becomes apparent from the fact that, after the return of the disciples from the first missionary journey, and when preparations were being made for the second, John Mark was ready and anxious to accompany the disciples again to Asia. We find this interesting record in the Acts: "And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark."

By what means John Mark was made to see his error and to repent we can only surmise. It is more than likely that Mary had some part in it. Glad as she was to look again upon the face of her son, on his return to Jerusalem after so long an absence, still she must have felt no little chagrin that her son had proven a deserter. It must have been a bitter disappointment to the mother, who naturally entertained great hopes for her son. Being a wise, as well as affectionate, mother, we can readily imagine how she may have administered a kindly, but earnest, rebuke to her son for his conduct. No doubt she endeavored to lead Mark to see his error and to repent of the wrong done the disciples, as well as his sin against the blessed Master, whose he professed to be, and whom



he professed to serve. If there is any consideration of an earthly character that would beget genuine and deep sorrow for a wicked and dishonorable act, it surely would be the pain and humiliation thereby inflicted upon a loving mother! There is no earthly incentive to noble and upright conduct like the approval of a parent solicitous for our good name.

Besides the influence of Mary in bringing about a reformation in John Mark, we can understand how Mark may have been present at that great council in Jerusalem, held some time after Paul and Barnabas had returned from this first missionary journey, at which the disciples "declared all things that God had done with them," and how he may have been affected by the reports he there heard from the lips of the disciples whom he had deserted. Hearing the story of their trials and triumphs in Asia, and seeing the honor bestowed upon Paul and Barnabas by the members of the council, John Mark would naturally feel the keenest remorse at not having continued with the disciples. How base a coward, how recreant to duty, how uncharitable in judgment, how false in profession, how dishonoring to the cause,—

these tormenting reflections must have been stirred in his heart as he sat in the council and listened to the story of the disciples whom he had betrayed. And as he contrasted his position of humiliation and shame with that of the disciples, rejoicing in the consciousness of duty well done and receiving the reward of their brethren's approval, and thought how he might have been sharing with Paul and Barnabas in the joys and honors of the hour, John Mark must have suffered the pangs of an accusing conscience and bitterly repented of his past folly. The righteous are bound to come to honor and to rejoice with exceeding great joy. In that day, if not before, remorse will seize all the unfaithful.

But one other fact may have had a great deal to do also in revealing to John Mark the enormity of his sin of unfaithfulness, and in bringing him to repentance. That was the apparently enforced idleness in which John Mark was made to spend the time after his return from Asia to Jerusalem. There is absolutely no record of any service Mark rendered the Church during all those four or five years inter-

vening between his return and the departure of the disciples on the second missionary journey. These seem to have been wasted, blank years. And there is hardly any other discipline more severe than enforced idleness, when one is able and anxious to be employed, either from the necessity of earning or the love of work. John Mark could live without working, but he was no "gentleman of leisure." He loved to be engaged in the service of the Master, if he could only have his own choice of place and method of work. But such selfishness of service God sometimes repudiates. If his servants will not work where he places them, God will often take away all opportunity to work. There are idlers in all our churches who protest that they want to be doing something for Christ and the Church, but who want their choice, and absolutely refuse to do anything not perfectly congenial. As long as that spirit remains, such members will, and ought to, continue in idleness. Such enforced idleness, when it brings forth its legitimate fruit, will expel all mean selfishness and prepare the idler for a truly consecrated service. Those idle years would serve

to give John Mark an opportunity to meditate on his ways, to learn the lesson of obedience to God's will and to humble him.

But whatever the influence, or influences, in working a needed reformation in Mark's religious views and life, he profited by his discipline and was ready when the opportunity came to go back to his old place.

But his discipline was not yet over, and he was doomed to disappointment. It was not so easy to get his old position back as he supposed. While Barnabas was willing to take Mark back, Paul had something to say about it. And so we find that the record continues, "But Paul thought it not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work."

There was a difference of opinion between Barnabas and Paul in regard to the desirability of taking John Mark back. And as we shall presently see, it was a decided difference. Paul's opinion prevailed and John was rejected. But why did Paul veto the reappointment of Mark, now that Mark has repented of his past sin? Is it because he bears him any grudge or holds any spite against him? No,

nothing of the kind. Paul was too great a man to entertain such petty feelings. As already intimated, there may well have been some considerations personal to himself. If it was dislike of Paul and unwillingness to submit to his authority that impelled Mark to desert the disciples, then Paul might still think that Mark would again make trouble for the same reasons. This is conceivable even on the theory that Mark had repented. Repentance or reformation does not secure immediate sanctification. One may be sorry for a course of action and yet not be reconciled to the cause of that action. And one may think that he can bear with an objectionable person, and yet be mistaken in this.

Paul could forgive Mark, but he could not so soon trust him again. Mark had betrayed weakness in his character, and Paul was afraid he might again fail them. We may repent of a sin, but the weakness in our natures which led to the committal of that sin does not leave us at once, but remains for some time, if not for life, and exposes us to a repetition of our former sins. It is only as we are fortified by the grace of God at our weak points that the lia-

bility of repeated failure is lessened or removed. Paul desired for the difficult and important service in Asia not merely repentant men, but also strong men. He had not yet had proof that John Mark was any stronger than he was before, and so he firmly, but kindly, declined his offered service on this second journey.

But Barnabas was willing to trust John Mark again! Yes, this amiable disciple was very anxious to take his relative with them on the second journey. It is just possible that their personal relationship had something to do in coming to the decision that Barnabas did. Then, Mary may have interceded with Barnabas in behalf of her son. We can believe that Barnabas would be easily persuaded in such a matter. But aside from the influence of others or considerations of blood relationship, Barnabas may have felt that John Mark had learned such a lesson and been so changed that he would never repeat his past folly. And, therefore, he desired to have the help of one who had formerly given such acceptable service, as well as to give the young man a chance to redeem himself.

It is no unusual thing for a man to fail once,

or even more times, and finally prove a strong and trustworthy servant of God. A man should, therefore, have more than one chance to prove his worth. And yet our sober judgment must justify Paul in his refusal to accept of Mark's services the second time. His refusal did not close, or was it intended to close, all doors to Mark. Paul knew there were other spheres in which Mark might serve his Master. He only judged him unfit for this particular mission upon which he and Barnabas had entered. Paul would grade the work of the Church, as the world grades secular labor, and he would select the men best suited for the various positions or grades. He would introduce the merit system into the service of the Church, just as men have introduced it in the service of the State.

The standard of service in our churches must be lifted higher. The pulpit standard, generally, has always been high. The trouble has been with the lay helpers. It is not because laymen of ability cannot be found in the churches. It is true there may not be in every church capable people enough to go around all the positions needing to be filled. But effi-



cient workers can be trained up, and any church can have a sufficient supply. The difficulty has been, not so much that capable members are unwilling to serve in the Sunday-school, on the Boards of the Church, or elsewhere, but that the best fitted have not been sought out or any effort made to prepare workers for the Church. The standard is low, and it is thought that anybody who expresses a willingness to serve is fit for any position in the Church. It is thought a dreadful thing to deny any one any appointment or position to which he may aspire. A superstition that God is calling the one who seeks an office or position in the Church to do the work of that position leads the appointing power to accept of the services of the first one that comes along. The calls of God, however, are generally to work we are unwilling at first to do. Moses was called of God to lead Israel out of Egypt, but he was unwilling at first and desired God to appoint some one else. It is safer to believe that the one whom the office seeks, rather than the one who seeks the office, is the called of God.

The rejection of John Mark by Paul was, of



course, a severe disappointment to Mark, as well as to Barnabas. But John Mark had to learn that while the Lord may forgive our sins, and while men also may forgive us the wrongs we do them, yet we must continue for a time to bear the consequences, to a certain extent, of our sins. It is a mistaken idea of many that when we repent of our sins we are in all respects the same as we were before we sinned. Sin leaves a blemish on our reputation and a wound on our character that time only can remedy. Mark's reputation with Paul, at least, was seriously impaired. And this fact must have caused Mark great grief. Remembering the high position of the apostle and his wide influence in the Church, what prospect of future usefulness, of an honorable career, could Mark hope for? It would seem that every door of opportunity would be closed against him, as was now the privilege of laboring in Asia.

But the evil consequences of John Mark's unfaithfulness do not fall upon him alone. It seldom happens that the sinner is the only sufferer from his sins. One of the consequences of our sin may be the furnishing of an occa-

sion for others to sin. This was true in the present instance. We have seen the difference of opinion between Paul and Barnabas in regard to Mark, and observed that it was a decided difference. Luke, the sacred historian, frankly states, "And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder one from the other." Think of it, these two old saints actually quarreling over the question of allowing John Mark to accompany them on this second missionary journey! And so bitter was the quarrel that, saints as they certainly were and old friends as they had been, they separate, never to labor together again, if indeed to meet again on earth. Of course, it is not to be supposed that they parted as enemies, or that they harbored any ill-feelings towards each other. But we would not excuse the disciples or lessen the scandal of their conduct. They went beyond all bounds in neither yielding to the other. It is certainly true that God overruled for good this first serious dissension in the Church. But that does not excuse the disciples or justify them in separating. Church dissensions not only greatly weaken the Church within, but also seriously weaken her

influence without. The Church put no more destructive weapon in the hands of her enemies than the numerous dissensions which disturb her peace and often rend her in twain. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth." It is the little foxes that destroy the vineyard. We cannot be too careful to avoid individual acts of unfaithfulness. A single member's failure may involve a whole church or society in the most serious trouble.

In the rejection of John Mark by Paul it must be observed that the apostle had a regard, not to any natural unfitness for the work in Asia, but solely to moral weakness. And any scheme for increasing the efficiency of Church workers must not disregard moral fitness. If any deficiency in a servant of God must be overlooked, let it not be moral deficiency. While it is true that, other things being equal, the man or woman of five talents will be the more efficient servant of the Church, yet the one-talent Christian may do more effective work for Christ than the five-talent man or woman. God uses "the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, and the foolish things to confound the wise." And again, "It is not by might nor

by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." And yet it does not follow that "might" and "power" are superfluous adjuncts. The meaning of the quotation so often heard seems to be that "might" and "power," in themselves considered, are not the really effective forces in the world, but that the secret of all true success is the Holy Spirit, working through "might" and "power" or not, just as He may choose.

The supreme need of the Christian is to be filled with the Spirit. And the five-talent believer needs this infilling just as much as does the one-talent believer. But not all Spirit-filled Christians have equal effectiveness. More may be expected of the Spirit-filled five-talent man than of the Spirit-filled one-talent man. Whatever our talent may be, let us make this our constant prayer :

"O fill me with thy fulness, Lord,  
Until my very heart o'erflow  
In kindling thought and glowing word,  
Thy love to tell, thy praise to sing."

## FIFTH PERIOD

Inconspicuous Service — Emerging from  
Obscurity—Literary Monument—Final  
Verdict



## V.

### INCONSPICUOUS SERVICE—EMERGING FROM OBSCURITY—LITERARY MONUMENT—FINAL VERDICT.

WE left John Mark a rejected candidate for reappointment to a position on the mission to Asia. What next? How does he take his disappointment? It is a very critical hour in Mark's life. Many a one has gone to pieces under just such circumstances. It is upon this rock that not a few have made shipwreck of their faith. We look, therefore, with deepest concern to see how John Mark will acquit himself in this crisis in his life. Will he despair altogether of achieving any great work for the Master? Will his spirits be crushed and all holy ambition be driven out of his breast? Will he be embittered against the Church and become cynical? How will he feel towards Paul? Will he take his rejection as a personal insult and vow revenge? We have seen these results follow an experience like that through which John Mark has just passed.

But let it be said to the honor of John Mark that he bore his disappointment like a man and a Christian. He did nothing rashly or foolishly. Failing to get what he wanted, he took the next best thing. He could not well insist on being appointed to a position he had once voluntarily relinquished. He was in a humble frame of mind. He felt that any service, however obscure, was good enough for him. Down in his heart he felt that he had been treated just as he deserved. A man of that spirit is not going to be left long without something to do. And he will accept whatever is given him to do. Accordingly, we read in Luke's journal, "And so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus. And Paul chose Silas and departed."

Barnabas sticks to his determination to take Mark, but he takes him under very different circumstances from what he hoped. And Mark goes on a foreign mission after all, but upon a much less important one than he had sought.

Nothing more is known of this mission of Barnabas and Mark to Cyprus than is recorded above. The two disciples "sailed unto Cyprus," and we infer from accounts of Mark



elsewhere that the vessel arrived in safety at the island. But there is absolutely no account of the work of the disciples on the island. We are justified in concluding that nothing of note was accomplished. There is a tradition that Barnabas suffered martyrdom on the island of Cyprus. Whether or not his death occurred while he and Mark were there together is not intimated in the tradition. The sacred narrative does not mention the name of Barnabas after the record of his departure with Mark. He is lost sight of altogether after that. And John Mark is not heard of again until after some ten or twelve years.

These were not idle years with John Mark, but they were years of inconspicuous service. Mark did nothing all these years to attract attention to him. He was doing the best he could, no doubt, and was really living a very useful life. But he was not making history, particularly.

However, very few out of the great host of Christian workers in any age are makers of history. The most of us labor on from day to day unobserved by the world about us. Our works are unrecorded by the pen of the his-

torian. And yet we are makers of history, too, and our works are included in the records of the world's achievements. When the historian comes to sum up the progress of the Church or the nation, our contribution helps to make up the aggregate of the results. Our names only and the particular contributions we make to the whole are omitted.

But if we perform no historical acts, achieve no fame, as the world counts fame, we make it possible for others to rise into eminence, and to hand down their names to future generations. Just as the mountain rests on the plane and is lifted by the plane beneath into prominence, so the great man springs from the common people and is given his prominence by the masses around him. A truly notable person is the product of several generations. Nothing of note may ever have been achieved by the great man's ancestors, and yet all that is great in him he has received from his ancestors. History does not know the name of John Mark's father, and only incidentally mentions the name of Mary, and yet this obscure couple, by what they gave of themselves to their son, raised Mark to honor and fame.

A life of obscure service is often only preliminary to and preparatory for a life of exalted service. Most men of eminence have risen from obscurity and there received the training which brought them into notice. In the case of John Mark there may have been a providence in separating him from Paul and in leading him into the obscurity of those ten or a dozen years. Emerson says, "A new danger appears in the excess of influence of a great man. His attractions warp us from our place." John Mark was in danger of being dwarfed in his growth by the great oak that towered at his side. Mark, therefore, must be put upon his own responsibility in order to develop in him the power of origination and execution. He must learn self-reliance. His powers of thought and expression must be brought out. He must acquire an individuality of his own, and grow into a manly independence.

Now all this could only be secured by a separation from Paul and a willingness to retire into an obscure life, so long, at least, as the character of his work will permit him to dwell in obscurity.

One of the benefits conferred upon the young

people of our modern churches by their organizations is the opportunity thus given for self-development and training in Christian work. These organizations should be granted the largest freedom possible. Only thus can their members be made to feel their responsibility, and acquire the experience so much needed by every young Christian.

But John Mark was not destined to remain hidden forever. He emerges from obscurity. Like his Master, he could not be hid. And where do we find him when next he writes his name on the pages of the Church's history? We find him at Rome, "the Eternal City." There is no notice taken by the historian Luke of his being at Rome, but we learn by implication that he was there.

Paul in two different letters written from Rome during his first imprisonment sends the salutations of "Marcus" and others, "my fellow-laborers." Of course, Mark must have been at Rome at the time these epistles were written. And he was there as a "fellow-laborer" of Paul. It does not appear whether Mark was summoned to Rome by the apostle or whether he himself decided to visit Paul at

Rome upon hearing that he had been carried a prisoner to that city. There is an interesting tradition that Barnabas made a dying request of Mark that he would hunt up Paul and become reconciled to him, as well as convey to the apostle the assurance of his brotherly love.

Although this is the first meeting between Paul and Mark since their separation a decade or more before, it does not appear to be the first knowledge the apostle has had of Mark. In one of the letters just referred to, namely, the letter to the Colossians, Paul seems to allude to a previous letter to the Colossians (now lost) written for the express purpose of recommending to them John Mark. The apparent allusion to a second letter is in these words: "Touching whom ye received commandments; if he (Mark) come to you, receive him."

It would seem that John Mark, after the death of Barnabas, probably in company with one or more unnamed disciples, visited Asia Minor and labored there among the churches founded by Paul and Barnabas. But unfortunately, news of his desertion of Paul and Bar-

nabas, and the trouble which arose in consequence, had reached some of these churches. They were, therefore, naturally prejudiced against Mark and hesitated to receive him. This was particularly the case with the church at Colosse. These brethren, therefore, seem to have written to Paul in regard to Mark's record, and to have inquired as to what they ought to do about receiving him. Paul thereupon, by some means, probably by a letter which has been lost, sends "commandments" that, if Mark comes to them, to receive him. But, for some reason, John Mark does not appear to have visited Colosse until after he visited Rome, on the occasion of which visit the Epistle to the Colossians was written. After remaining at Rome for a part of Paul's two years' imprisonment, Mark made the contemplated visit to the church at Colosse, as well as to other churches in that region. But the next definite notice we have of John Mark finds him at Babylon, "that exceeding great city," the metropolis of Assyria, where the apostle Peter was then laboring. Writing from Babylon to the churches in Asia, Peter sends the salutations of "Marcus, my son." This letter of Pe-

ter also proves that Mark had previously visited the churches in Asia and was personally known to them. From Babylon, Mark goes back to Asia and revisits the churches there. While in Asia, Mark receives an invitation from Paul through Timothy to accompany the latter on a visit to him at Rome, where he is the second time confined a prisoner. Having urged Timothy to come to him, Paul adds: "Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is useful to me for ministering."

The most significant thing in this brief sketch of Mark's recent movements is the changed attitude of Paul towards Mark. We see him recommending him to a church, welcoming him as a visitor, calling him his fellow-laborer, and finally sending for him, saying, "He is useful to me for ministering."

How are we to explain this complete reconciliation of Paul and John Mark? What has changed Paul's opinion of Mark? Can we account for it on the theory that Paul has grown more charitable with advancing years? No, for there does not appear to have been any lack of charity in his former opinion. Possibly, then, Paul had learned not to expect so much

even of the followers of Christ, and had lowered his standard. No, for he never expected the impossible of any man and never lowered his standard. The true explanation is found in the fact that John Mark had come up to Paul's standard, and the apostle having discovered the improvement in him, gladly gave Mark his confidence and eagerly availed himself of his services. It does great credit to the manliness of the apostle that he was willing to reverse his opinion of Mark as soon as Mark showed that he deserved a better opinion. But it reflects still greater credit upon John Mark that he so changed his ways, and so faithfully wrought in the service of the Master as to justify Paul's reversal of opinion.

While it is nowhere so recorded, yet we cannot doubt that Mark went with Timothy to Rome. The hazard involved in a Christian entering Rome at this time of persecution would not deter Mark from making the journey, for he had outlived his former cowardice. Now he would have no more fear of entering Rome than had Luther of entering Worms, when he said, "Though there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on its roofs, still would



I enter." Then, this visit of Timothy and Mark was understood to be the last they would ever be permitted to make their beloved counselor and friend, as Paul had told them that "the time of his departure was nigh." How eager, therefore, would these two disciples be to have one more look into the familiar face, and to hear again the familiar voice! And how anxious, too, they would be to minister to the last wants of the great apostle, and to make his last hours on earth as comfortable and peaceful as possible! But, alas! doubt has been expressed, and there is no proof to the contrary, as to whether Timothy and Mark arrived in Rome in time to see Paul before he suffered martyrdom. There is a tradition that they were captured and imprisoned in Rome, although Mark, at least, finally escaped. While all is uncertain in the life of John Mark after the death of Paul, say, A.D. 68 (Paul was undoubtedly put to death under Nero, and Nero died in June, 68), yet he would appear to have lived a number of years subsequent to that event, and to have labored as an evangelist in different parts of the world. That he visited Egypt and preached there seems probable, whether we ac-

cept or not the tradition that he founded the Church there and became its first bishop.

One of the undoubted achievements of John Mark to which reference has not yet been made, and a work he seems to have performed after the death of Paul, was the compilation of a life of Jesus the Christ. This, indeed, is his chief monument. By this he is and ever will continue to be chiefly remembered. It reflects the greatest glory on his character. To it more than to anything else in his life he owes the high place he occupies in the esteem of the world. And yet the other acts of his life already reviewed reveal the character of the man better, while this literary work attests especially his intellectual abilities. It is a seal, however, upon his saintly character that the Holy Spirit chose him and inspired him to perform this monumental work.

We must not detract from the honor due Mark for the production of the second Gospel by bestowing too much credit upon Peter for the part he took in its production. For, however much credit may justly be due the apostle, the production of the Gospel of Mark is essentially the work of Mark. Peter may have

prompted the undertaking of the work, and must have furnished many incidents and facts in the life of the Lord, but Mark himself had personal knowledge of much that is recorded, and others of the disciples, as Mary, could furnish a great deal of the material. But the plan of the book, the putting together of the material, the composition and distinguishing characteristics of the Gospel, must have been the original work of John Mark.

The eminent success with which all this is done proves the great intellectual ability acquired by John Mark. For the vividness and picturesqueness of style, the catholic spirit and historic accuracy of the Gospel of Mark make it quite the most readable of all the Gospels, as well as the most valuable in many respects of them all.

This last of the well-accredited performances in the life of John Mark furnishes a fitting close to the career of a most worthy saint. We have no sure account of the death of Mark, but no doubt the end came at last to him, whether at Alexandria or elsewhere, as it came to most of the conspicuous servants of God in the first century, at the martyr's stake.

In making a final estimate of John Mark's character, and in summing up the lessons of his life, a few things in general are worthy of our careful attention. Has the reader observed the perfect naturalness of everything in the progress of Mark's life? He seems like a modern saint, and he is an example of the making of a saint in our day, more than in the age in which he lived. The trouble with most of the saints of the Bible is the exceptional experiences in their lives. Miracles are invoked in their behalf; supernatural power is given unto them; they hear voices, see visions and dream dreams. But so far as we are informed, nothing of all this happened in the life of John Mark. He had to depend wholly upon the method of God in dealing with souls in the common experiences of mankind. For this he is all the more an encouragement to aspiring souls in every age of the world. We of to-day feel that here is a man, weak like ourselves and tempted as we are, compelled to put forth every effort he is capable of if he would win and triumph at last over every obstacle by the grace given to every man who is making an honest fight to be true

and faithful. What John Mark became any other earnest soul can become.

Beauty, as well as strength, adorned the character of John Mark. It was not all resistance of evil, solemn performance of disagreeable duty, self-sacrifice and dogged perseverance. The typical saint used to be and still is in the minds of some a man whose black clothes hang loosely over an emaciated body, whose disheveled locks fall about a visage of pallor and sadness, and whose solemn conviction is that this world is a Siberia to which the human race is exiled on account of sin! But fortunately this mediæval caricature of a saint is fast becoming an extinct type. Men are learning that a true saint is one upon whom rests "the beauty of the Lord our God." "God giveth us richly all things to enjoy," and strange that any one at all familiar with the teachings of the Saviour should ever have failed to learn the joyous nature of the Christian life. The character of John Mark does not repel, but attracts. You feel that here is a manly man, living out the idea of an apostle who said, "Quit yourselves like men." It would disabuse the minds of many of their erroneous ideas

of true religion if Christians reflected more the "beauty of holiness." The way of the transgressor is hard, but "the path of the righteous is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Let us live, therefore, so as to show, as we believe John Mark did, that

"There's sunshine in my soul to-day,  
More glorious and bright  
Than glows in any earthly sky,  
For Jesus is my light."

But the Christian life is not a holiday, if it is a happy life. The Christian must "work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work." John Mark will be remembered as "a worker for Jesus." And it was no easy berth he chose. Some think the character of a saint ill-adapted to the rough-and-tumble life of this world. But Mark proves not only that a saint can live the knock-about life of the world, but will come forth from the rough seas of this life all the more polished and beautiful for the experience, like the smooth and shining pebbles which are washed by the billows upon the ocean beach.

John Mark was one of the heroes of faith. Is

it said there is nothing heroic in the character of a saint? Why, it takes a hero to be a saint; at least, it takes a hero to be much of a saint. Where are there to be found in the whole range of the world's history truer heroes than those whose names are given in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews? Religion makes its appeals to and fosters the very elements of heroism. Manliness, courage, honor, sacrifice, sympathy, love, hope of reward—these are the constituent elements of practical religion as well as of heroism. It is true that the Christian religion counsels forbearance and discourages war. But there are heroes besides those who engage in personal encounter. Peace has its heroes no less than war. To forbear may require a greater hero than to retaliate, and to conquer self than to conquer an enemy. "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city." John Mark's heroism is seen in his self-mastery and self-making.

John Mark impresses us as having been an eminently sane man. Only once did he lose his head, and that was in the early part of his career. Every man is apt to play the fool some time in his life, but no man need keep up



the performance. Perfect sanity is a growth, and John Mark never, so far as we know, repeated the folly of his youth. Religious faith has always been a prolific source of manifold absurdities. It is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous, and the very sublimity of religion is its temptation for ignorant, weak and unbalanced minds.

"The worst of madmen is a saint run mad."

The greatest enemy of religion is the religious fanatic. But John Mark was no fanatic. There was nothing morbid about his faith. He was zealous, but not "without knowledge." He was a modest, sensible, level-headed man. At the same time, from the point of view of some people, John Mark would appear mad. Festus thought Paul "mad," and the family of Jesus, in the beginning of his ministry, said, "He is beside himself." To the unbeliever faith is a species of insanity. To the easy-going, consistency of life is eccentricity. To the Greeks the preaching of the Gospel was "foolishness." But the only question to come before a commission on lunacy in such cases as those above would be the truth or falsity of Chris-



tianity, for if our religion be true, then the only sane person on earth is the consistent Christian.

We have been looking now upon the finished product, and have been led to admire the wisdom, power and goodness of the Providence which made so great a saint of the Jerusalem lad. At various stages in the process, notably at two, we were puzzled, or would have been, had we not already known the sequel, to understand how anything saintly could be turned out of such a nature. John Mark himself and Paul, not to speak of Barnabas, who must have had his misgivings, and Mary, too, although a mother's faith is the last to waver, must have doubted if anything good could come out of a runaway and a castaway. But God sees the end from the beginning, and he has a plan for every life. We cannot see the purposes of God in leading, or suffering us to be led, in certain ways. We are like "Mrs. Faber," one of George MacDonald's characters. "I wonder why God made us," says Mrs. Faber bitterly. "I am sure I don't know where was the use of making me." "Perhaps not much yet," replied Dorothy; "but, then, he hasn't made you; he hasn't done with you yet. He is making you

now, and you don't like it." No, we don't like it! And because we don't like it we won't have it that our trials are our growing-pains. But if we cannot understand what an artist is going to produce after only a few strokes of the brush or chisel, why should we expect to understand the incomplete work of the great Artificer of our lives? "A Christian man's life," says Henry Ward Beecher, "is laid in the loom of time to a pattern which he does not see, but God does; and his heart is a shuttle. On one side of the loom is sorrow, and on the other is joy; and the shuttle, struck alternately by each, flies back and forth, carrying the thread, which is white or black as the pattern needs. And in the end, when God shall lift up the finished garment and all its changing hues shall glance out, it will then appear that the deep and dark colors were as needful to beauty as the bright and high colors."

We will not, then, lose hope in our own future or that of another in the hour of greatest weakness and wretchedness. God is able and willing to make our deepest humiliations minister to our highest exaltations. This is the great lesson of John Mark's life. It is the

lesson of the power of man, under God, to gain self-mastery and to overcome the world. It is a lesson on the method of God in the making of saints. And after our meditation thereon we can heartily say with Browning:

"Then welcome each rebuff  
That turns earth's smoothness rough,  
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but go!  
Be our joys three-parts pain!  
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;  
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the  
throe!

"So, take and use thy works;  
Amend what flaws may lurk,  
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!  
My times be in thy hand!  
Perfect the cup as planned!  
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the  
same."

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